

OTTER SURVEY - SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

The applicant's attention is drawn to The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended), which states that it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a wild animal of a European protected species included in Schedule II of these Regulations, which includes otters. It is also an offence;

- (a) Deliberately to disturb such an animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;
- (b) Deliberately to disturb such an animal in such a way as to be likely to;
 - (i) affect the local distribution or abundance of the species to which it belongs;
 - (ii) Impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or care for its young; or
 - (iii) Impair its ability to hibernate or migrate;
- (c) Deliberately to obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place of such an animal; or
- (d) To damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.

If there is evidence of otter activity on the site, all work must cease immediately and further advice must be sought from the Wildlife Officer, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Klondyke Building, Cromac Avenue, Gasworks Business Park, Lower Ormeau Road, Belfast. BT72JA. Tel. 02890 569623

To ensure your development proposals comply with the Regulations, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has asked you to carry out an appropriate otter survey. Surveys can generally be done at any time of year. Where a survey method is invasive a survey licence must be obtained from NIEA.

- The surveyor contracted to undertake this work must have relevant experience which is deemed acceptable to the Department, for example an ecological consultant with experience of, and/or qualifications in, mammal surveying.
- The date and time of the survey and the qualifications of the surveyor should be included in the survey report.
- Surveys should be carried out well in advance of any planned construction works.
- The survey should establish whether otters have established holts, (active or inactive) or use the area for foraging. All evidence of use by otters found, for example, spraints, footprints, should be included.
- The information should be presented in a written report and must include large scale maps, at 1:500 scale. The exact location of holts and holt entrances should be identified.
- If necessary, the report should recommend the most appropriate ways in which otters can be protected during the proposed construction works, and suggest appropriate mitigation methods.
- If Otter holts are found to be present, surveys to assess whether they are being used for breeding will be needed.
- In the event that the planning application goes to appeal or public inquiry, the person contracted may be required to appear at, or give evidence to, the inquiry.
- For more information on otters and development, contact NIEA, Natural Heritage.